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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 001344

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: HAITIAN ELECTIONS GOING NOWHERE FAST

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 1240
[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 1134
[1](#)C. PORT AU PRINCE 1329

PORT AU PR 00001344 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Thomas C. Tighe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: While the Core Group ambassadors are generally supportive of pressuring the GoH to move forward with indirect and senatorial elections, we have not yet presented a united message, in writing, to President Preval. In conversations with Core Group ambassadors, Preval has shown no enthusiasm for elections. Parliamentarians have joined the push, signing an accord demanding that the government publish the results of the December 2006 and April 2007 local elections, and that the GoH extend the mandate of the current provisional electoral council (CEP) to include the fall senatorial elections. Meanwhile, the provisional CEP continues reporting minor progress to donors and the Haitian community, but cannot boast of any significant achievements. Next steps are presenting the non-paper to Preval and advocating for a strong director general of the CEP. End summary.

International Community Lethargic

[1](#)2. (C) Following the July 5 Core Group meeting in which representatives from the major donors agreed to push Preval on elections (ref A), the Embassy drafted a non-paper to present to Preval describing our position. MINUSTAH elections staff made edits to the draft, and UN SRSG Mulet distributed the non-paper to the other Core Group members for their comments and approval. The Ambassador of Argentina was the only Core Group member to comment on the draft, arguing that the paper should not place equal importance on the indirect elections and the senatorial elections because the senatorial elections are more crucial to Haiti's democracy. (Note: This runs contrary to our position that the indirect elections are of equal importance, and even less likely to happen given Preval's resistance to decentralization of the Haitian state. End note.) We are continuing to push Mulet to place a deadline on comments so we can present a final non-paper to Preval.

¶3. (C) Before presenting the non-paper, Canadian Ambassador Claude Boucher argued for the necessity of first broaching the subject of elections with Preval in person. Boucher told Ambassador Sanderson that he asked Preval in July what his plans were for elections, and Preval responded that elections are not really of interest to him. SRSB Mulet told Ambassador Sanderson that he also raised elections with Preval, and got a similar response.

Preval Apathetic

¶4. (C) President Preval told Ambassador Sanderson on July 31 that Haiti must have indirect elections. The Ambassador asked if Preval intends to hold elections for the third of the senators whose terms expire in January 2008. He said yes, but when pressed for a timeline, he responded, 'We'll see.' Preval said he does not understand why the international community is advocating a permanent CEP when the current one can run the upcoming senatorial elections. (Note: The Embassy of Canada is particularly adamant that the current CEP is incapable of running the senatorial elections. End note.) The Ambassador noted that we have misgivings about the current director general's ability to carry out the senatorial elections, and Preval acknowledged that he is aware of our concerns. However, he said he cannot appoint a new director general of the CEP. When the Ambassador pointed out that such an appointment is within his power, he shrugged.

CEP Director General Defensive

¶5. (SBU) Interim director general of the CEP Francois Benoit presented to Haiti's major donors on July 18 his perspective

PORT AU PR 00001344 002.2 OF 003

on the CEP, the indirect elections and the senatorial elections. Benoit argued that public perception that the CEP is ineffectual is misguided, and listed a number of activities the CEP has undertaken in the last few months, beginning with drafting a law governing the indirect elections (ref B). He said the GoH was slow to react to the law, and then finally in early July formed a committee to study it. (Note: Forming a study committee is viewed as a stalling tactic in Haiti. End note.) In the interim, the CEP has been 'selling' the legislation to different members of parliament and explaining it to the public via the press, according to Benoit. Benoit's presentation was accusatory, calling doubts about the CEP 'unfounded' propaganda disseminated by those who would like control over the CEP. Benoit blamed the Ministry of Finance and UNDP for delays in financing electoral operations, and said that the executive branch is slowing the entire process with its lack of enthusiasm.

¶6. (SBU) In the meantime, according to Benoit, the director general's office is moving ahead with plans for the senatorial elections, with a stated emphasis on simplification of the process and reduction of costs. He estimated the total cost at USD 6,250,000 and said the execution of the process will take 140 to 150 days, or nearly five months. Francois Montour, Haiti director for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), responded that it is out of the question for the international community to pay 100 percent of the bill for the senatorial elections. MINUSTAH elections unit director Marc Plum added that the international community should force the GoH to dispense some of its own funds, including those left over from previous elections. (Note: The GoH does have funds designated for elections, and post agrees new donor money should be used to supplement, not replace, those funds. End note.)

Parliament Demands Elections

17. (U) Six senators and 16 deputies, led by Senator Rudolph Boulos, signed a resolution on July 28 calling for the immediate publication of the local election results for the county councils (ASECs) and town delegates. (Note: The President received the results signed by the CEP and the Prime Minister on July 21, but the palace had not published the official record as of August 8. End note.) The resolution also demanded publication of a decree setting the procedure needed to complete the electoral process initiated in 2005; a new law extending the mandate of the current CEP to encompass the 2007 senatorial elections; and an information campaign for elected representatives and citizens about the procedures of indirect elections. The resolution states that if the GoH does not respond to these demands by the end of August, the parliament will summon the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior to demand an explanation. (Note: Senator Boulos is an emerging leader in the senate and various members of the international community have noted to Poloff his growing influence over his colleagues. Regarded as sensible, Boulos publicly disapproved of the Chamber of Deputies recent vote of no confidence in the Minister of Culture (ref C). He said the vote will create friction between the executive and the legislative to the detriment of the country. End note.)

18. (C) Comment: The international community is losing patience with Preval's obvious disinterest in moving elections forward. We will continue with plans to present our concerns in writing via the Core Group non-paper, with the expectation that the document, followed by direct meetings with Core Group ambassadors, will inspire Preval to action. According to CEP and MINUSTAH timelines, preparations for the senatorial elections must begin immediately if there is any hope of inaugurating new senators in January 2008 as required by the Haitian Constitution. Given these time constraints, it appears unlikely that the GoH will install a permanent CEP with enough time to prepare senatorial elections. Regardless of whether the provisional CEP oversees senatorial and indirect elections, we will continue to urge Preval to appoint a strong director general

PORT AU PR 00001344 003.2 OF 003

to ensure the successful and timely execution of those elections.
TIGHE